



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Engineer Research and
Development Center

News Release

Release No. A-02-06

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For Release: Immediate

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ERDC receives 2006 Army SBIR and STTR Quality Award

An initiative sponsored by the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) received a 2006 Army Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Phase II Quality Award. The project, "Developing a Seamless Integration Between Machine Learning Techniques and Rule-Based Classification of Remotely Sensed Imagery" was proposed by Visual Learning Systems Inc., Missoula, Mont. Of the 254 projects eligible to compete, 34 were nominated for an award. The selection board chose the six projects that represented the best in technology innovation, relevance to the needs of the Army, and commercialization potential.

Visual Learning Systems Inc., an Overwatch Systems Corp., developed Feature Analyst as a tool for automating the collection of information from remotely sensed images. It provides the Army with a complete toolset for extracting all features, such as roads and buildings, from imagery and scanned maps. Providing accurate real-time geospatial information (GI) affords significant benefit to U.S. forces, essentially removing the adversary's home field advantage and saving lives. Easily integrated into existing GI systems and image processing software packages, the tool enhances but does not change current workflows. Several independent studies show Feature Analyst can save 80-90 percent of the time currently spent by analysts on feature collection. Feature Analyst is used by all components of the Department of Defense, including several intelligence organizations.

Congress initiated the SBIR program in 1982 to increase small business participation in federal research and development (R&D). Phase II of a project lasts up to two years with up to \$730,000 in funding. The STTR program was established in 1994 as a three-year pilot program and has been reauthorized until 2009. The STTR program has the same objectives as the SBIR but requires participation by universities, federally funded R&D centers or other non-profit research institutions. Phase II of these projects lasts up to two years with up to \$750,000 in funding.

The ERDC is the premier research and development facility for the Corps of Engineers. It consists of seven laboratories at four geographical sites, with more than 2,000 employees, \$1.2 billion in facilities, and an annual research program approaching \$700 million. It conducts research in both military and civil works mission areas for the Department of Defense and the nation.